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ABSTRACT

The Title I program, the federal government's largest elementary and secondary school program, has been redesigned in order to make improvements in the nation's poorest schools. This brochure describes a two-volume book that provides examples of schools and communities working together to provide children with more time to learn. The strategies provided in the book suggest that Title I, working with schools and communities, can contribute to enhanced learning outside of the traditional school day, work, or year. The featured programs base their activities on goals specifically set to address students' needs. Promising practices include the following: careful planning and design; links between the extended time and the regular academic program; a clear focus on using extended time effectively; a well-defined organization and management structure; parent and community involvement; a strong professional community; cultural sensitivity; a continuous search for funding; a willingness to resolve and work around obstacles; extended-time tutoring and homework-help sessions; and thoughtful evaluations of program success. (LMI)

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ED 389 093

Extending Learning Time for Disadvantaged Students

SUMMARY

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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AN IDEA BOOK

EA 027 809

BACKGROUND

School consumes only a small part of a student's time. Opportunities for learning occur in the hours children spend outside of school, yet disadvantaged students often lack access to activities that will further their growth. The Title I (formerly Chapter 1) program, the Federal government's largest elementary and secondary school program, has the potential to support many new and exciting strategies for extending learning time. This idea book provides examples of schools and communities working together to provide children with more time to learn.

This two-volume idea book describes approaches that rely on a broad definition of learning time that includes traditional classroom instruction, community service, and extracurricular and cultural activities. The first volume, Summary of Promising Practices, is intended to serve as a resource for policy makers as they engage in planning extended learning opportunities. The second volume, Profiles of Promising Practices, is geared to assist practitioners as they develop and implement extended time programs in their schools.

PROMISING PRACTICES

The programs featured here base their activities on goals specifically set to address students' needs. These goals promote high academic and behavioral standards and cultivate productive links between the student and the world beyond the classroom. Promising practices include:

- **Careful planning and design,** which establishes clearly defined needs and goals; determines the best time of the day, week, or year to offer the program and the amount of time to be added to student's learning opportunities; and considers program costs. For example, ASPIRA's after-school programs in Chicago and Raising Hispanic Academic Achievement in Silver Spring, Maryland, both address the particular academic and social problems faced by many Hispanic students.

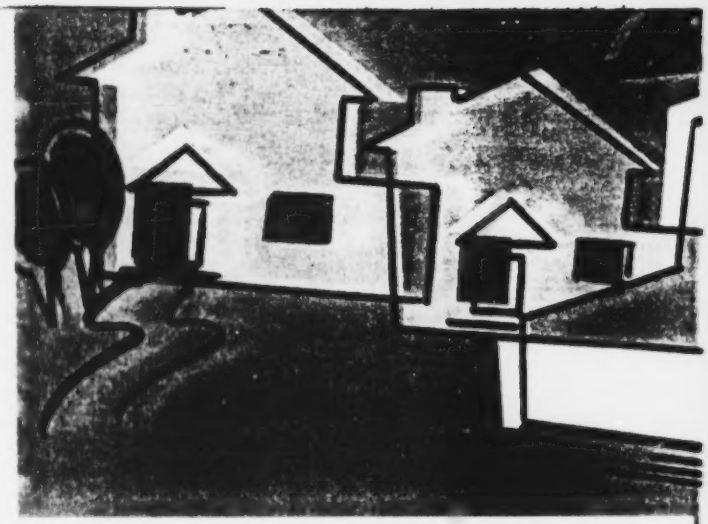
- **Links between the extended time and the regular academic program,** which connect the added time to school experiences. These connections are made in several ways: (1) regular classroom teachers and principals refer children to the program and provide information on students' needs; (2) classroom teachers staff the extended-time activities, increasing the programs' coordination and continuity with classroom activities; and (3) programs use textbooks and materials from the students' regular classes for extended-time tutoring and homework help sessions.

- **A clear focus on using extended time effectively.** Good extended-time programs use instructional practices that actively engage students' attention and commitment. These practices may include traditional classroom methods, such as individualized instruction, as well as organized recreational or cultural activities. In one extended-time program, students completed an environmental study about the Rio Grande River, learning its history and its impact on their community.

• **A well-defined organization and management structure.** As programs evolve, planners must develop structures for hiring and supervising staff, selecting students, monitoring performance, and guiding the program. The shape of these structures depends on whether programs are developed by schools, by districts, or in partnership with outside agencies or organizations. At the Yuk Yau Child Development Center in Oakland, California, teachers from the Center and the local school talk daily about students' needs for special assistance or any problems that develop. The coordinator of the Kids Crew programs at the Brooklyn Children's Museum keeps a journal with descriptions of all activities, projects, and lesson plans in the curriculum; samples of work produced by each project; assessments of what children learned; and evaluations of the program by students.

• **Parent and community involvement.** Research shows that collaboration among schools, parents, and communities widens the pool of resources, expertise, and activities available to any program, giving disadvantaged students more options. Successful programs feature involvement by parents or the community, or both. In many cases, parents and other community members play an active role in planning, designing, or managing extended-learning opportunities. The Educational Program for Homeless Children and Youth in Devil's Lake, North Dakota, includes take-home reading lessons to involve parents in student learning; tutors and program staff also offer tips on how to help children learn at home.

"I can't imagine trying to implement a program like this without the full commitment of the school system."



• **A strong professional community.** Professional staff development for the programs profiled in this idea book varies according to budgets and program goals. At a minimum, staff development offers an orientation to program goals and objectives, curriculum, and requirements. Other areas for staff development often include expansion of teachers' instructional repertoires, ideas for enrichment and hands-on activities, interpersonal skills, subject-matter expertise, cultural awareness, techniques for working with students with special needs, and student assessment. At the extended-day kindergarten program in Florence, South Carolina, follow-up activities or information accompany each staff development session so that these sessions are not isolated activities. In addition, the program requires all staff—including volunteers, teacher aides and assistants—to be involved in staff development.

• **Cultural sensitivity.** Many good programs make cultural sensitivity a priority that manifests itself in activities for students—such as bilingual instruction and cultural clubs and events—as well as in staff development. Some programs reach beyond the cultures of their own participants to the greater diversity of the community, through field trips, guest speakers, and special seminars. The Brooklyn Children's Museum, which operates the Kids Crew program, is located in the diverse community of Crown Heights. A recent theme, "Celebrations and Traditions," included a walking tour of the neighborhood; staff described how each religion celebrates the

Good extended-time programs connect the added time to regular school experiences so that students learn and succeed academically

holidays during December and explained the religious meaning of the decorations. Students took photographs during the tour, and in later sessions they discussed the differences and similarities between Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, and Christmas.

• **A continuous search for funding.** Program planners must search for funding continuously and creatively, looking to both new and traditional sources of funding for support. Options include federal categorical programs, special funding from state departments of education, funds from private foundations and educational organizations, and support from community agencies and organizations. For example, ASPIRA provides some funding to Chicago public schools that operate the after-school programs, while the school district and local schools provide space, supplies, and staff; private funding has eased the financial burden on the district and schools.

• **A willingness to resolve or work around obstacles.** Extended-time programs for disadvantaged students face many challenges to planning and implementation, including problems with attendance, transportation, staffing, and safety during nonschool hours. Good programs find ways to resolve or work around these obstacles. In particular, programs that have experienced long-term success appear to have solved the problems of reliable transportation and locating the program in a safe, central location. Bilingual support staff of the Summer Program for At-risk Students in Indiana visit participants' families to help with housing, employment, health, and education needs that may hinder students' success.

• **Extended-time tutoring and homework help sessions.** The Educational Program for Homeless Children and Youth in Devil's Lake, North Dakota recruits students through the regular schools and uses school facilities for extended-time activities. The director meets with classroom teachers to discuss each student's achievements and needs. Many teachers in the summer program are teachers in the regular school system.

• **Thoughtful evaluation of program success.** Success in school and beyond requires not only intellectual but also social and emotional growth. Several programs profiled here assess student progress not only by typical measures of academic achievement, but also by outcomes such as students' leadership and team effort. The after-school study centers in Omaha collect their own assessment data, which include program attendance, informal follow-up of high school students who graduate and go on to postsecondary institutions, and anecdotal evidence.

The strategies provided in this idea book suggest ways Title I, working in tandem with schools and communities, can contribute to enhancing learning outside of the traditional school day, week, or year.

OTHER IDEA BOOKS PRODUCED AND PLANNED

- Implementing Schoolwide Projects
- Raising the Educational Achievement of Secondary School Students
- Roles for Educational Paraprofessionals in Effective Schools
- Using Technology for Learning
- Services to Migrant Children

Copies of An Idea Book on Extending Learning Time for Disadvantaged Students are available by writing the Planning and Evaluation Service, U.S. Department of Education, 600 Independence Avenue S.W., Room 4162, Washington, DC 20202, or by calling (202) 401-0590.

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